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Hannah Betts

INSIDE TIMES 2

Deborah Ross

Let's not laugh at middle-class woes

Tories blast Welby for 'parroting' Labour view

Archbishop tells unions to take on economic evil

Kaya Burgess
Religious Affairs Correspondent

Conservative MPs attacked the Archbishop of Canterbury yesterday for "parroting Labour policy" after he criticised the government and described the gig economy as "the reincarnation of an ancient evil".

Days after backing tax rises for the rich, the Most Rev Justin Welby said that he would ignore pleas to "stay out of politics" as he delivered one of his most strident speeches at the TUC conference.

He said that there was "something wrong with the tax system" if it allowed online giants such as Amazon to "leech off the taxpayer". He also made an impassioned plea for a "new unionisation" of Britain, noting that "Christian socialists" had played a key role in the founding of unions and the Labour Party.

He added that ministers should scrap the universal credit policy, insisting: "If they can't get it right, they need to stop rolling it out." He further challenged the government to put food banks and night shelters out of business by removing the need for their services.

The speech prompted criticism from Conservatives, including Charles Walker, MP for Broxbourne, who said that the archbishop was backing "John McDonnell's point of view". Mr McDonnell, the shadow chancellor, welcomed the address and said that the archbishop was simply "telling it like it is".

Archbishop Welby said before his speech that senior clergy were often

told to "stick to religious and spiritual matters and stay out of politics". He confessed before taking the stage that he would not be heeding those calls, noting: "I have a feeling today might be another one of those days."

The Tory MP Ben Bradley tweeted: "Not clear to me when or how it can possibly be appropriate for the Archbishop of Canterbury to be appearing at TUC conference or parroting Labour policy."

Mr Walker said that the archbishop should "have the courage to remove his dog collar" and become a politician, adding: "There are a diversity of views as to what is best for the economy, but [he] only seems interested in presenting John McDonnell's point of view."

The archbishop said in his speech that his words were "political, but not party political", adding that it was "dangerous when left or right claim God is solely on their side".

Archibald Tait had been the first Archbishop of Canterbury to talk to TUC leaders in 1879, a first step in ending the church's "scandalous hostility" towards unions, Archbishop Welby said. Since then, Lord Carey of Clifton is the only serving archbishop to have addressed the TUC, in 1997.

Archbishop Welby told delegates that workers were still being oppressed, noting: "The gig economy, zero-hours contracts, is nothing new, it is simply the reincarnation of an ancient evil." He added: "There must be a new unionisation, or there will only be a new victimisation."

Mr McDonnell said: "He is simply

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Homecoming Josie Russell, 31, who survived a hammer attack in Kent 22 years ago that killed her mother and sister, said in an interview yesterday that she had moved with her fiancé to the cottage in North Wales where she grew up. Page 8

Mumsnet is driving fear of childbirth, expert warns

Tom Whipple Science Editor

Mothers who post graphic accounts of the birthing process on websites such as Mumsnet are contributing to a rise in phobia of childbirth, a senior academic has said.

Sharing such descriptions might be therapeutic for the mother who had gone through the experience, but pregnant women could be traumatised by reading "horror stories" about birth, Catriona Jones, of the University of Hull, said.

"All you have to do is google 'my experience of childbirth', and you are met with a tsunami of stories," said Mrs Jones, who researches tocophobia, the extreme fear of labour. "If you go into Mumsnet forums, women are telling stories about childbirth — 'it's terrible, it's a bloodbath'. I think that can be difficult to deal with."

According to a study last year, an estimated 14 per cent of pregnant women suffer tocophobia globally, and there appears to have been a rise since 2000.

Mrs Jones, a lecturer in midwifery, was bought in to investigate the phenomenon after NHS perinatal mental health services became concerned about the number of healthy women asking for caesarean sections because of a fear of natural birth.

"They came to us and said that women were being referred to them late on in pregnancy and they were having to work with them to unpick their fear of childbirth," said Mrs Jones, who was speaking at the British Science Festival.

Tocophobia is defined as occurring when anxiety about giving birth overwhelms a woman's daily life.

Dame Helen Mirren once claimed to have developed a fear of giving birth after being made to watch an explicit sex education film at convent school.

Justine Roberts, Mumsnet founder, said that horror stories served an important purpose. "Mumsnet users are, in the main, impatient with the idea that adult women aren't entitled to discover the truth about the full spectrum of birth experiences, from the blissful to the terrifying," she said. "One of the most common complaints we see on this topic is 'Why on earth didn't anyone tell me the truth about how bad it could be?'"

IN THE NEWS

Threat to Britain

The greatest strategic threat to Britain comes from President Trump's dismantling of the rules-based international order, a former national security adviser has said. **Page 2**

Egypt deaths dispute

The daughter of a British couple has rejected an official explanation that an outbreak of *E. coli* was to blame for their deaths last month at a Red Sea hotel. **Page 7**

ECG on smartwatch

Apple has announced the latest version of its smartwatch, saying it offers consumers the first over-the-counter electrocardiogram (ECG) function. **Page 22**

Brussels border force

The European Union has announced plans for a 10,000-strong armed border force with extensive powers to detain migrants and deport failed asylum seekers. **Page 34**

Bank mulls dividend

Royal Bank of Scotland could use up to £4 billion of surplus capital to pay a special one-off dividend to shareholders, its chairman, Sir Howard Davies, has said. **Page 41**

Football agent finding

Four out of every five transfer deals in the football Premier League last season involved the same agent being paid by player and club, research by *The Times* has shown. **Page 76**